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A difficult and urgent task facing the university is the formulation of a satisfactory philosophy of public service. Because of the great interdependence between the university and society, it is a notion that cannot be rejected. On the other hand, overcommitment to public service could result in a damaging financial burden, a dwarfing of major institutional pursuits, or a loss of the university's reputation for objectivity. Thus, each institution individually must decide how much and what kinds of public service functions to assume. In establishing limits, the simplest precept for the university to follow is to undertake only those activities that are a direct outgrowth of and will strengthen regular teaching and research programs. Governance should be modernized to include public service functions. Activities to be considered in deciding policy are (1) establish high standards of racial integration in campus housing (2) provide a refuge and platform for dissenters (3) manage, on an emergency basis, urgent national or local projects for which no auspices can be found regardless of their inherent research or training value (4) provide leadership to coalesce various forces into a joint attack on large-scale social problems. In so doing, the university should guard against actively seeking federal contracts simply for self-aggrandizement, being regarded merely as a pool of talented manpower available on call, or accepting long-term responsibilities for managing projects of little benefit to the university's internal functions. A variety of pressures, including desire within the academic community, impel the university to expand its public service role. (JS)

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THE UNIVERSITY AT THE SERVICE OF SOCIETY

Summary of an all-day discussion by the trustees
at the 61st Annual meeting of the Carnegie Foundation,
November 16, 1966

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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The University at the Service of Society

THE notion that academic institutions should reach out to serve the workaday needs of a developing society is over a century old in this country. Although Justin Morrill, in sponsoring the Land-Grant College bill in 1862, appears to have been primarily interested in the nexus between democratic access to higher education and the maintenance of political democracy, he and others believed that in time this new type of institution would also be a congenial home for a novel additional function—direct service to the wider society.

The public service function of the land-grant colleges did not, however, materialize for several more decades, because these new colleges were preoccupied simply with the struggle to survive. When it did develop shortly after 1900, it related specifically to the vocational needs of what was still a predominantly agrarian society and took the form of an extension service from campus to farm. The demonstrable success of the "cow colleges" in increasing agricultural production and improving farm life through this means became a principal justification for expenditure of public tax revenues on them.

They also served, as Morrill hoped they might, to educate young men and women of humble parentage. But it was agricultural extension, and the applied research on which this depended, that for some years occupied the more honored place in these institutions. And because in its day and place this peculiarly American invention in higher education worked, indeed worked brilliantly, it came to have a wide influence on popular notions about the proper "uses" of the university.

It was also during these years, and even earlier, that some universities initiated general extension programs for the public, and these, too, represented public service of a high order.

Nonetheless, it was not until the First World War and the period immediately following it that public service began to be regarded as a responsibility of universities generally. The idea that it was an acceptable function for any academic institution was, of course, given considerable additional recognition

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as the result of the deep involvement of the universities in the 1942–1945 war effort. Since then, in response to the pressing needs of a maturing society for fundamental solutions to its ever more complex problems, public service has become a large and important activity at virtually every university, both public and private, and at many colleges as well.

What is Public Service?

University public service today has burgeoned to include a wide range of new activities—in science and technology, in health, in urban problems, in the international field, in economic development, in the utilization and conservation of natural resources, and in a great variety of other areas. The university, with massive contract and grant funds from the federal government, has become a major instrumentality through which the nation is accomplishing some of its most important business. It is virtually axiomatic now that when a substantial new national program is launched—the Peace Corps, the Regional Medical Program, or whatever—universities will be deeply involved in its implementation. Indeed, much federal legislation today is predicated on that assumption.

University public service is a concept which is difficult to define precisely. Although it is usually thought of as one of a triumvirate of university pursuits, it can and often does include the other two, teaching and research. For example, courses for municipal officials in a school of public administration can be regarded both as part of the normal teaching function and as public service. And a study of racial imbalance in an urban school system undertaken as a public service responsibility may also prove to be intrinsically interesting sociological research, justifiable in traditional academic terms. Similarly, investigations in the area of environmental pollution, although commissioned by a federal agency to solve a particular problem, may very well contribute basic new scientific knowledge.

Nevertheless, public service is, in most of its manifestations, readily recognizable. It has to do with the outreach of a university to society at large, with extending the resources of the campus to individuals and groups who are not part of the regular academic community, and with bringing an academic institution's special competence to bear on the solution of society's problems. It can involve all members of the academic community, including students, although most frequently we think of it as an activity of the president and of the faculty. It can take place on or off campus, and can be related to either the governmental or private sectors of our national life.

Lastly, the emphasis in public service is on converting knowledge into readily usable forms for immediate application.

Demand and Supply

A variety of forces impel the university toward expansions of its public service role. Some of these forces reflect demand—the requirements of society—and others, supply—the special capabilities or characteristics of the university particularly qualifying it for the role. More and more, however, demand and supply are in such close interaction as to be scarcely distinguishable from each other. On one side, our society today has compelling needs which force it constantly to call on the university for assistance; on the other, the university has characteristics which increasingly attract the larger society. Thus, demand and supply are reciprocating forces thrusting public service activity by the university forward at ever higher speed.

This phenomenon is explainable in part by the almost symbiotic relationship today between science and art, or in simpler terms, knowing and doing. A few decades ago a lengthy hiatus between the discovery of knowledge and its application was normal. Today in many fields, although regrettably not in some, the process is nearly instantaneous, to such a degree has ours become a knowledge-oriented society. And the application of knowledge is no longer a simple matter. So complex has this process become in many fields that the university's help is needed there also.

The heart of the matter is that the university is the natural home of those kinds of highly trained and specialized talent on which the larger society is heavily dependent. In the university's science and social science departments, in its engineering and medical schools, and in many other places within its walls are housed the individuals best qualified to solve, or at least mitigate, some of the nation's most difficult problems. Since it is the national will that these problems be attacked, pressure on the university for its help is immense.

This pressure is exerted much more heavily than in the past on the university's traditional areas of responsibility, the production of highly trained manpower and the discovery of new knowledge. Beyond these functions, however, the university is being asked today to take on many kinds of new public service tasks, including the management of large-scale scientific, technological, and social enterprises. Although the university's record in carrying out these tasks has perhaps been uneven, its achievements generally in all three areas—teaching, research, and service—have been so centrally important as

to lead some observers to believe that the society's future salvation will depend essentially on this institution alone. The immensity of such a responsibility and the almost limitless performance expected of the university are cause for deep concern among those who manage its affairs.

A further attribute of the university is its capacity for objectivity. Of all social institutions, it provides the most hospitable home for free enquiry. It can permit individual members of its community to pursue their own paths of investigation even if these conflict. It is prepared for error in the search for ultimate truth. In the outside world, this quality of objectivity assumes extraordinary value in situations of extreme social tension or in areas of decision where economic or social stakes are high.

Within the university itself are forces contributing to an expansion of the public service function. Wholly admirable is the genuine concern that many faculty members, administrators, and students feel for directing their talents and energies to the nation's most grievous problems. The desire to be socially useful outside the academic community is considerable at the present time. And frequently coupled with this kind of motivation is a scholar's belief that, by participating in public service activities himself, he can bring a heightened sense of reality and greater vividness into his teaching.

Less admirable is the motivation that derives solely from a scholar's realization that his special competence has an unusual market value outside the university. Less admirable also is the ambitious administrator's conviction that his institution's prestige can be instantaneously and inexpensively inflated by large government, foundation, or industrial contracts or grants for domestic or international projects for which the institution may well be ill suited.

More difficult to weigh is the sense of exhilaration that many university people feel in getting away from their campuses from time to time to take part in stimulating new enterprises in Washington or abroad. This can be a form of escapism if overdone, but it can also serve to bring vitality to the campus.

The Debate Over Public Service

So large and varied has public service become that concern has begun to arise on some campuses over whether this relative newcomer to the academic enterprise—some would still say intruder—is not getting out of hand.

There would be little disagreement today that involvement in public service activities has been good for the university. Teaching has benefited;

campus life has acquired a greater relevancy and liveliness; students have developed more mature attitudes. The availability of a real laboratory rather than an abstract one, of an actual problem rather than a theoretical one, makes the university a more vigorous institution. Furthermore, the university's willingness to reach out from its protected environment to help grapple with some of the community's nastier problems has won it new admirers and allies and broader public support.

Nevertheless, public service has both present and potential risks, and in some institutions these have been too little recognized. Most clearly apparent to administrators is the financial burden which outside activities frequently place on the university. However generously funded these may seem to be, eventually there will be unexpected costs for the institution. In some instances also there is confusion about just how these activities are to be funded, and they can become indirectly, or even directly, parasitic on income required to finance the traditional responsibilities of the university.

A second and obvious danger is that if public service activities are allowed to proliferate in an uncontrolled manner on a campus they may in time become the university's dominant activity, dwarfing other pursuits. Students will then with justice attribute the neglect or lack of personal attention they feel to the faculty's heavy involvement in public service. And many faculty members will rightfully believe that applied research, or in some cases what passes for it, has taken precedence over basic research.

Another danger, perhaps more theoretical but nonetheless possible, is that deep involvement in external, public service activities may lead a university imperceptibly to develop a kind of "institutional doctrine" on some issue or, at any rate, come to be regarded by the public as a protagonist for a particular cause or point of view. This could conceivably jeopardize one of the university's most important characteristics—its role as a hostel for the accommodation, in an atmosphere of tranquility and mutual respect, of individuals with widely variant views on important social and moral issues. (Of course, this caution applies only to the university, not to the off-campus activities of faculty members and students as *individuals*.)

The Extremes

There are, theoretically, two diametrically opposed positions which the university may adopt as it considers its public service role.

In the first of these, public service is regarded as an inappropriate and irrelevant function for the university on the grounds that it is inconsistent with

an academic institution's basic responsibilities for teaching and the discovery of new knowledge. Those who share this view say that it is the duty of university leaders not to be engaged in selling the university's services but in protecting its essential integrity. This, they believe, must be done by getting government, industry, and even the public at large to understand that the national interest lies in preservation of the university's true nature as the institution which above all others is concerned with learning. This implies impressing upon all possible sources of assistance the urgent importance of adequate support for the tools of learning, such as the great research libraries, and for leaving the university free to pursue its basic mission.

In this view, the university is not regarded as having a responsibility to become involved in the substantial new government programs which appear periodically. And the university should be particularly wary of the frequently heard argument that, since government is going to be spending its large new appropriations anyway, the university should pitch in and help ensure that the money is well spent.

Nor is the university regarded as having a responsibility, whatever the appeals made to its sense of patriotism, to lend its manpower to government for various kinds of service. This will simply strip the university of its best people and destroy whatever cohesion and internal power it has as an institution.

Finally, the university in this view should abjure any conception of itself as an activist shaper of the larger society. It should not "bite off propositions," develop "positions," or be a "protagonist" for causes. It should stick to the pursuits of the academic cloister with which it has traditionally been concerned and carry them out to the best of its ability. All else is in the end illusory.

At the opposite pole is the view that, among all institutions in the nation, the university has the greatest responsibility to be a shaper of the society. As such it has an obligation to identify social wrongs and take an aggressive lead in rectifying them. It must be engaged, activist, reformist. It must, furthermore, be prepared to reach out into the larger community, and it must respond whenever it can to any legitimate call from government for assistance, including both the provision of manpower and the acceptance of public service responsibilities.

In this view, the university can best protect its position not by an attitude of aloofness from the great social issues of the day but by actively engaging in them. And this kind of activist role, far from detracting from the traditional functions of teaching and research, will actually strengthen them.

The philosophical support for this position is that since the university stands for the highest values of the larger society of which it is a part, it has a consequent duty to intervene where it can to assist the society to conform to these high values. To do less would be to be untrue to itself.

Each of these positions is, of course, in its absolutist form, unrealistic in the light of constraints which operate on all universities today. It is useful, however, to delineate the positions in sharp outline, because on every campus there are individuals who hold tenaciously to one doctrine or the other, and there are universities, or more likely certain departments or professional schools within universities, which lean more toward one position than the other.

A More Realistic Stance

In one way the two positions are not as antithetical as they seem. If the university is a true university, it is concerned not just with teaching and research in a strict sense but more broadly with cultivation of the intellect and the faculty of reason, with the refinement and deepening of moral conscience, and with sharpening of aesthetic sensitivities. It must, therefore, inevitably become a powerful, if indirect, force for social change and improvement. Out from its citadel will go educated men and women with a passion to remake the world. From it will emanate ideas and knowledge that will be revolutionary in their impact. This will be public service in its truest form.

This broader area of congruence between the two extreme positions does not, however, answer the immediate question facing every university of how far it should go in making its resources available for a wide variety of public service activities. How responsive should it be to the needs of society, and how permissive should it be in allowing the members of its own community to initiate service projects off campus?

In practical terms every university will realize that it can no longer adopt the simple course of rejecting public service altogether. Interdependence between the university and society has become too great for that. The university *must* have society's support. Society *must* have access to the university's resources. Were the university to turn its back on society's needs, it would be tantamount to self-destruction.

But self-destruction can, equally, lie down the road of too much engagement by the university in public service, either turning it into a kind of universal service station or so directly involving it in the restructuring of society that a major share of its energies and resources are perpetually engaged in external controversy.

There must, then, be a practical middle ground. This need not be simply a weak compromise. It can be a positive position arising out of a deliberate consideration of the questions: How much public service? What kinds? How can a consistent policy for control of the mushrooming function be developed and administered?

Toward a Workable Philosophy

Each institution must in the end answer these questions for itself. But in doing so it may find it useful to consider some general propositions about appropriate and inappropriate kinds of activities in the public service area.

First, the university can, in regard to controversial social issues such as racial integration in housing, look carefully at its own practices and adhere to high standards on its own campus.

Second, the university can play an important role in providing a refuge—even platform—for the dissenter in society, the man with unpopular or unconventional views. In the American democratic society, where consensus has always been given such a high value, the man with another voice can too easily become a stranger with no place from which to be heard. But it is essential to the health of the society that he be heard. The university, in providing a sanctuary for this purpose, can meet one of society's greatest needs, and this too is a form of public service.

Somewhat akin to this function is the role the university can play as an objective agency of society in providing contending forces with a place to meet under dispassionate and intellectual sponsorship.

Third, a rather different type of public service which the university can on occasion perform is the management, on an emergency basis, of urgent national or local projects for which no other auspices can be found, regardless of whether there is research or training value in them for faculty or students. This sort of service must be offered with restraint and only with the understanding that the responsibility will be passed on to some other body as soon as possible. The old French proverb, "Il n'y a rien qui dure comme le provisoire," however, applies all too frequently in these situations.

Another activity of this kind can be the organization and carrying out of demonstration projects, because demonstration is in itself an aspect of the production of knowledge. For example, it would seem to be appropriate for a medical school to take on responsibility for the delivery of comprehensive health care to a defined population group to show how improvements might be made over existing arrangements.

Fourth, a role which the university can occasionally play is to provide leadership for the coalescence of a variety of constructive forces in society into a joint attack on large-scale social problems. In such enterprises the emphasis will be on partnership with government, industry, voluntary organizations, school systems, and other agencies rather than the university being the sole operator. This is a role that should leave the university free to withdraw when more permanent leadership has been established, or to continue its participation only in limited ways with limited responsibility.

On the other hand, the university should not be an active seeker of government contracts simply to aggrandize itself. It will occasionally take such initiatives, but its role should generally be more passive. It will respond when it can to calls for assistance, but always with an eye to the possible harmful effect on its responsibilities for teaching and the search for new knowledge.

The university must be careful not to allow itself to come to be regarded merely as a pool of talented, specialized manpower available on call for assignments in the larger society. The talent is there principally for the internal purposes of the institution. In some instances of severe national need it will, of course, be made available freely, but these should be limited. Otherwise, absence from the campus should be subject to normal leave arrangements.

And finally, the university must avoid the acceptance of long-term responsibility for the management of public service projects in which benefit to the internal functioning of the institution is minimal. Such projects should be transferred to other auspices as quickly as possible.

Some Special Problems

There are some particularly thorny problems which crop up in aspects of the university's engagement in public service. The first arises when it is involved in overseas work on contract from the federal government. In these circumstances the university is clearly a contractual agent of the government; it has an obligation to conform to official American policies in the foreign country concerned, and it is subject to whatever controls the host government may impose through its laws or other regulations.

But what is not so clear is the status of the individual faculty member involved in the project or the nature of the restrictions imposed on him. Is he in any sense personally a representative of the American government? Opinion is divided on this question. Does he, when actually engaged in the contract project abroad, enjoy the same academic freedoms and privileges he

enjoys when he is on his own campus at home? In practical terms he probably does not, but where should the line be drawn? On this question also there is considerable difference of opinion.

Few will disagree, however, that when it comes time to sign a contract with the federal government the university is a completely free agent and has an obligation to negotiate terms as nearly consistent with the accepted practices of academic freedom as is possible. What these terms should be will depend on the circumstances of the project, but at a minimum they would seem to include free publication rights, full disclosure of the purposes of the contract, and full disclosure of the sources of funding.

Another set of problems stems from a university's involvement in classified work for the government. As a matter of patriotic duty in time of war or other national crisis, many universities undertake such work. However reluctant they may be, they do so because there is no feasible alternative. Nevertheless, the presence on a campus of a project about which faculty are unable to communicate freely with students or with each other violates the essential teaching function of the university. Any such activity should, therefore, as quickly as possible after the extreme national emergency has passed, be transferred off campus to some other auspices. It is then up to the faculty members involved in the activity to decide whether to depart with it or stay in the university and take up other kinds of nonclassified work. There would appear to be no justification for having projects involving industrial secrecy located on the campus.

A rather different situation arises when a faculty member as an individual is engaged in classified work as a consultant to government or industry. This is fairly commonplace and does not seem to raise the same problem as that of having a secret project actually located on campus. Here, although the practice may perhaps be an irritant to university administrators, the matter is one which is essentially an individual affair not threatening to the basic integrity of an academic institution.

Still another type of question which arises from time to time has to do with the nature and extent of the university's legal and moral responsibility when members of its faculty or student body are engaged in off-campus public service activities. If, for example, an authorized student organization, having raised funds on the campus for an off-campus project, then gets into some kind of trouble in carrying out the project, is the university liable to suit? Or, in another kind of situation, is it morally liable for the legal costs of students or faculty who are individually prosecuted or sued while taking

part in a project which the university has sanctioned although not actually sponsored in its own name?

Clearly the nature of a specific case will have a good deal to do with the answer in each instance. But in general terms this problem area appears to be relatively unexplored and one where some further work and clarification would be desirable.

Organizing for Public Service

Increasingly aware that they are inadequately organized to administer off-campus activities efficiently, a number of universities have created special administrative devices, institutes, centers, and so forth, to control these activities. These are found with increasing frequency in the international and urban studies fields, and they are helpful.

Basically, however, many universities today are simply not governed in such a way that they can determine and enunciate any policy with regard to their public service role. On some campuses this is because public service is a relatively new phenomenon, whereas the bylaws of such universities, having been adopted in an earlier era and for a different concept of the university, confine their definition of corporate authority and responsibility to the teaching function alone. In these instances there is apt to be no way in which the faculty as a corporate body can be involved in the formulation of a university policy on public service. Such policy as there is may be simply the accretion of a body of precedent decisions on particular cases by a succession of administrative officers at various levels in the institution.

What would appear to be desirable now, where needed, is the modernization of university governance to take account of all three functions in which the typical institution is engaged today—teaching, research, *and* public service. Such a process would have the salutary effect of focusing the entire academic community's thought on the function of public service and perhaps lead to a redefinition of the meaning of the university in today's world. It would at the very least bring to many people a realization that the governance of universities is becoming a matter of far more than institutional significance —that it relates directly to the viability of our knowledge-centered society.

Are There Alternatives?

As the burden of public service becomes heavier within the universities, the possibility of alternatives needs to be examined more carefully. Must all of the tasks which the university is being asked to take on by society be placed

there? Has the university itself been too accommodating? Too eager to respond? Too much motivated to destroy its ivory tower stereotype?

Among the alternatives to be considered are nongovernmental organizations such as independent nonuniversity research institutes, professional and scholarly societies, technical assistance, health, welfare and other types of voluntary agencies; private industrial firms; state and local governments; and the federal government itself, which is the originator and funder of a large proportion of the new social tasks.

Another alternative, which has already had some consideration in the federal government by both the administration and Congress, is to increase the numbers of universities capable of taking on major public service responsibilities—a spreading of the load. This has been quite successful in some programs, for example, in the training of Peace Corps volunteers. Nevertheless, the additional institutions that have been drawn in have their problems too of rapid growth, insufficient resources, and overcommitment. Furthermore, there are some tasks which require concentrations of specialized talent found only on a few campuses, sometimes on only one campus, and these are almost certain to be the campuses of the leading universities.

A more promising alternative may be the development of closer working relationships in the public service area between universities and various kinds of nonuniversity agencies. In such alliances the university would take only that part of the responsibility for which it is uniquely suited, such as the training of specialized manpower for a particular program, leaving to its partner the operational phases. In some cases, where no appropriate partner could be found, a university either alone or in a consortium with other institutions might create a separate operational mechanism. This has been done successfully in the scientific and technological areas but only infrequently in other fields.

A Precept

Even after a process of elimination, there will still be a number of public service tasks that can be carried out only by a university. These are the tasks that are either so complex as to require talent available nowhere else or so sensitive as to necessitate the kind of objectivity most likely to be found in the discipline of the scholarly community. In view of the evolving nature of American society and the unique attributes of the university, many observers have become skeptical about the possibility of ever being able to lighten the public service burden of our major educational institutions.

Thus the formulation of a satisfactory philosophy of public service is a task of the greatest urgency. It is, at the same time, one of the most difficult assignments facing the American university today. On the one hand the university must remain faithful to its highest ideal, the pursuit of learning; on the other, it must be responsive to the legitimate needs of the society that sustains it. Furthermore, it has a responsibility to make that society a better society. Perhaps the simplest and most satisfactory precept for most institutions to follow is to participate, if possible, only in public service activities that are a direct outgrowth of their regular teaching and research programs and that, in turn, feed back into and strengthen them. Obviously this precept is not applicable in each of the many and various situations which arise today, but it does offer initial guidance in coping with a pressing, complex issue.